

Belle Isle Residents Association, Inc.
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bod@belle-isle-residents.org – www.belle-isle-residents.org

March 11, 2009

Mr. Luis Revuelta
2950 SW 27th Avenue, Suite 110
Miami, FL 33133

RE: Proposed Development at 31 Venetian Way

Dear Mr. Revuelta,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with the Belle Isle Residents Association and other concerned members of our community to present your proposed project for 31 Venetian Way.

As you know, we live in a very special neighborhood that is the gateway to the historic Venetian Causeway to and from Miami Beach. The Venetian is the oldest remaining causeway in South Florida and listed on the National Register of historic places as well as designated as one of America's 10 most beautiful highways; it is a unique regional asset, enjoyed by locals and tourists alike.

The building site at 31 Venetian Way occupies a huge portion of the land on the north side of Belle Isle. While we fully respect the rights of the property owner to redevelop the property, we feel that the proposal as it currently exists is incompatible with existing buildings on the north side and that it would create an imposing, solid, flat glass-walled building at the entrance of this very special island.

At our meeting you heard residents raise concerns they had with your project – many of the same concerns expressed by City Planning Staff. We support City Staff recommendations and ask that the Design Review Board support them as well. We feel the following issues need be addressed before this project is approved:

1. The proposed view corridor is obstructed. Residents would like to see the view corridor(s) maximized and kept as true view corridors. As City Planning Staff has suggested, we would like to see the "bridge" joining the two buildings completely removed in order to reduce massing and provide an unobstructed view. We are also concerned that the elevation of the pool area/portico entrance may be raised too much to provide a view of the water for pedestrians from the sidewalk and street. A solution would be to combine the two buildings into one, leaving a single larger view corridor at the southeast corner of the property, closest to the eastern bridge;
2. The current proposal imposes a wall approximately 600' long and five stories high with additional rooftop structures, both at the waterside and the street side of the property. We would like to see the façade of the building redesigned to provide relief in height, varying between 4 and 5 stories, as well as depth, creating variable setbacks along the façade, using finishes more compatible with existing buildings on Belle Isle;
3. The proposed project destroys existing green space and landscaping. We ask that future plans include mature, lush landscaping along the façade and throughout the property to further soften the impact and provide a buffer to surrounding areas;
4. The ingress and egress of traffic entering the property is too close to the intersection of Island Avenue North and Venetian Way and will cause excessive traffic congestion. Traffic and safety conditions are already problematic there and are currently being studied by the City and County's engineering departments; we ask that you reconfigure the entrance to have less impact on the intersection;

*Scott Diffenderfer, President – Josh Fisher, Vice President – Sandra Money, Secretary – Keith Hark, Treasurer
David Ballard – Barbara Cowen – Barbara Frank – Herb Frank – Nancy Liebman – Rosemary Ravinal – Irene Sperber*

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5. The loading area for trash pickup and deliveries is insufficient for 50 additional units and a building area increase of almost 80%. Vehicles not able to fit in the area will have to park on the street, creating additional traffic backups. Emergency vehicles using the street already have a difficult time because of traffic from the Standard Hotel blocking the west side of the street;
6. The addition of all one-bedroom apartments is incompatible with the needs of people moving to the island; the neighborhood has become much more family-oriented in recent years. We highly recommend providing one, two and perhaps three-bedroom apartments rather than 179 small one-bedroom units. Additionally, since the area is zoned residential with a minimum of six month rental period, we request the developer and his assigns commit to maintaining, in perpetuity, a minimum six month rental period.

Although the current design is within the maximum allowed requirements, we believe that redesigning this project to address the concerns listed above will result in a project that is more compatible with the neighborhood and that is appropriately scaled for the property. If these issues are adequately addressed, the Belle Isle Residents Association will support the project.

We appreciate you taking the time to meet with us. If I can provide you with any more information, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at 305-458-3334 or at scott@scottdiff.com.

On behalf of the residents of Belle Isle, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Scott Diffenderfer
President, Belle Isle Residents Association, Inc.

cc: Neisen Kasdin
Andrew Frey
Miami Beach Design and Review Board
Miami Beach Planning Department